

DISTRICT OFFICE
135-27 38TH AVENUE, SUITE 388
FLUSHING, NY 11354
(718) 888-8747
FAX: (718) 888-0331

CITY HALL OFFICE
250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1749
NEW YORK, NY 10007
(212) 788-7022



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
PETER KOO
COUNCIL MEMBER, 20TH DISTRICT, QUEENS

CHAIRPERSON
TECHNOLOGY

COMMITTEES
CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS LICENSING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
LAND USE
PARKS AND RECREATIONS
TRANSPORTATION

SUB-COMMITTEES
LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING
AND MARITIME USES

March 13, 2018

Chairman Ajit V. Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to reverse course on recent and proposed actions to weaken the essential Lifeline low-income consumers' discount program. The FCC's proposed actions will cause irreparable harm to the very consumers this program is intended to protect - New York City's low-income households. We therefore respectfully call upon you and your fellow Commissioners to forego your proposals to:

- Disincentivize telecommunications carriers and low-income households from participating in this vital and life-saving program.
- Restrict Lifeline availability by:
 - Implementing lifetime funding caps for individuals. This would limit the eligibility of individuals, possibly during their most vulnerable end-of-life medical crises.
 - Applying arbitrary annual budget caps that would end availability when funding – rather than need – runs out each year.

We believe Lifeline should be preserved without sacrificing its original intent to provide low-income customers access to essential services, and therefore urge the FCC to:

- Ensure Lifeline remains accessible for those who now depend on it for access to medical providers, 911, family contact, and for those veterans who find access to job offerings, education, and supportive communities.
- Keep affordability at the core of Lifeline's mission. The FCC Notice of Proposed Rule-Making wrongly speculates that low-income people will value Lifeline more if they are required to pay for it. Low-income consumers do not need to be "taught" to value Lifeline; they value that which best serves to help feed, house, clothe, and maintain the health, safety and welfare of their households.
- Maintain mobile voice-only service options for all Lifeline-eligible consumers rather than just those in rural areas. Mobile emergency access is crucial for many in need—its popularity in urban settings underscores their dependence on it.

- Do not require members to pay into the program when services exceed the discount. This would essentially create a system requiring co-pays and could prove prohibitive given the often tumultuous changes in income level of low-income communities.
- Retain and support those free plans that are priced at the same level as the program subsidy and offer limited minutes, and a free cellphone. This is the service that is most useful among low-income people as they do not require deposits, credit checks, or monthly payments. If eliminated, those who are homeless, survivors of domestic violence and weather crises, and veterans suffering readjustment traumas would be left without assistance.
- Re-establish the designation of vetted Lifeline Broadband Providers, enabling consumers to apply the subsidy to voice, data, broadband, or bundled service. As with those who can more readily afford varied modes of communication, the needs of low-income people vary depending on their life circumstances. Families with school-age children need access to the Internet while seniors living alone may require 911 and caregiver voice service. Do not deny low-income people the range of services essential to establishing and maintaining a healthy, successful quality of life for them and their families.

As representatives of some of NYC's most vulnerable, at-risk, and determined low-income communities, we stand firmly against the changes proposed by the FCC. They work against the letter and the spirit of the original 1985 program, which aimed to provide access to people unable to obtain services fundamental to contemporary life. The digital divide needs to be bridged by the full range of available tools at our disposal, not widened so that the most vulnerable among us are further hampered in their quest to live healthy and productive lives. As elected officials representing the City of New York, we urge you to maintain and preserve the Lifeline program so that the most vulnerable of our constituents are not deprived of the support systems they so desperately need. Thank you for your time and consideration.

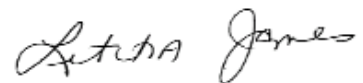
Sincerely,



Peter Koo
Chair, Committee on Technology
District 20, Queens



Corey Johnson
Speaker



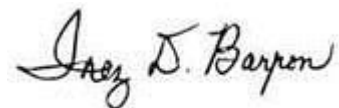
Leticia James
Public Advocate



Adrienne Adams
Council Member
District 28, Queens



Alicka Amprey-Samuel
Council Member
District 41, Brooklyn



Inez Barron
Council Member
District 42, Brooklyn



Justin Brannan
Council Member
District 43, Brooklyn



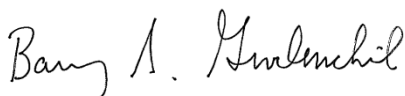
Margaret Chin
Council Member
District 1, Manhattan



Chaim M. Deutsch
Council Member
District 48, Brooklyn



Mathieu Eugene
Council Member
District 40, Brooklyn



Barry Grodenchik
Council Member
District 23, Queens



Robert Holden
Council Member
District 30, Queens



Ben Kallos
Council Member
District 5, Manhattan



Karen Koslowitz
Council Member
District 29, Queens



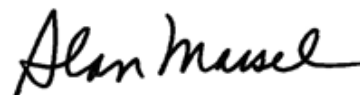
Rory Lancman
Council Member
District 24, Queens



Stephen Levin
Council Member
District 33, Brooklyn



Mark Levine
Council Member
District 7, Manhattan



Alan Maisel
Council Member
District 46, Manhattan



I. Daneek Miller
Council Member
District 27, Queens



Keith Powers
Council Member
District 4, Manhattan



Donovan J. Richards
Council Member
District 31, Queens



Deborah Rose
Council Member
District 49, Staten Island



Helen Rosenthal
Council Member
District 6, Manhattan



Ritchie J. Torres
Council Member
District 15, Bronx



Mark Treyger
Council Member
District 47, Brooklyn



Paul Vallone
Council Member
District 19, Queens



Kalman Yeger
Council Member
District 44, Brooklyn